

Heritage Citation



East Brisbane Primitive Methodist Churches (former)

Key details

Also known as	East Brisbane Methodist Church
Addresses	At 20 Norman Street, East Brisbane, Queensland 4169
Type of place	Church, Hall
Period	Federation 1890-1914, Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Carpenter Gothic, Queenslander
Lot plan	L182_RP11520; L183_RP11520; L3_RP34156; L4_RP34156
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2005 Date of Citation — November 2015

Construction Roof: Corrugated iron;
Walls: Timber

People/associations Arthur Morry (1894) (Architect);
Hall and Prentice (1925) (Architect);
J. Hood (1925) (Builder)

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (D) Representative; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

The site comprises two church buildings, the first constructed circa 1890 with additions in 1894 and the second constructed in 1925. The East Brisbane Primitive Methodist congregation was established in 1888, following estate sales in East Brisbane which freed up land and encouraged residential development. The parish, originally in temporary accommodation in Didsbury Street, relocated to Norman St in 1890 and a 'tabernacle' was erected on the site. A larger church was necessitated by the congregation's dramatic growth in the early twentieth century. The new church was designed by architectural firm Hall and Prentice and constructed by J. Hood, while the smaller tabernacle was used as a hall and Sunday School room. In 1977, following the amalgamation of the Australian Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches, the East Brisbane Methodist Church became part of the Uniting Church of Australia. In 1989 the church was sold to the Noah's Ark Toy Library and Resource Centre.

History

Although portions of land in East Brisbane were offered for sale in the 1850s, the area was semi-rural in character in the mid-nineteenth century. A number of elite estates along the riverbank included large residences, but away from the river the built environment comprised only a few isolated houses scattered through the bush. It was not until the subdivision and sales of these rural holdings into residential allotments in the mid-1880s that East Brisbane significantly developed as a residential suburb.

The site on which these buildings stand was part of Eastern Suburban Allotment 129, 30 acres of land granted to David Ferdinand Longlands (or Langlands) in 1856. Longlands, a property investor, was one of only four property owners in the area bounded by Vulture Street, Wellington Road, Kingfisher Creek and Norman Creek. Like much of East Brisbane, Longlands' allotment remained undeveloped until the 1880s. In 1881 land agent David Love advertised 'The Longlands Estate', promoting its proximity to services, Kingfisher Creek and the 'well-known Suburb of Mowbray, which is now dotted with choice villas'. Love and Francis Nash became owners of the ESA 129 in 1882, and immediately began to sell subdivisions.

Subdivisions 182 and 183 of the Longlands Estate were purchased by Benjamin Waylett in January 1882 and transferred to John Hadden four months later. Neither owner appears to have occupied the site, which remained vacant as Norman Street developed around it. In April 1891 the subdivisions, plus an adjoining allotment, were sold to Peter Aston, a minister of the Primitive Methodist Church.

The Primitives were the second strongest branch of the Methodist Church in Queensland, only exceeded in congregation numbers by the Wesleyans. Primitive Methodist Services conducted by lay preachers commenced

in Brisbane in 1859, and the first minister arrived the following year.

By the 1880s the Primitive Methodists made up only a small portion of Brisbane's population – just 1.78% – but their numbers nearly doubled in the next five years to 2.2%. Being of an evangelical outlook, the Primitive Methodist Church was committed to establishing local places of worship. The growing suburb of East Brisbane, already home to an Anglican, Presbyterian and Lutheran church, was ideal for Primitive Methodist expansion. In 1888 church services began in a small building on Didsbury Street, followed by a shop in Stanley Street. At the Primitive Methodist Church's Annual Assembly in 1889, East Brisbane was amongst numerous places sanctioned for the purchase of land, with a £100 grant for building costs. In 1890 a small church was erected on Peter Aston's site, subdivisions 182 and 183 of the Longlands Estate.

Although the church was constructed on land owned by Aston, the minister was not involved in the East Brisbane church at that time. Aston had acquired the site while he was still engaged as preacher at the Valley Methodist Church. As the East Brisbane parish struggled to make an impact, however, Aston took an interest in the church's survival. He began preaching at the church, and in 1892 he requested leave from the Valley congregation in order to transform the East Brisbane Primitive Methodist Church into a mission church. In 1893 he was appointed minister of the East Brisbane parish.

Under Aston's leadership, the church made 'considerable progress'.¹ By 1894, the formerly small congregation had outgrown its church, and significant additions were deemed necessary. These were designed by lay preacher of the Primitive Methodist Church, politician and architect Arthur Morry. As an architect Morry undertook a large amount of ecclesiastical work, and his best known extant design is the Brisbane Synagogue [QHR, 600127]. Morry also designed and supervised the construction of a Presbyterian Church on Wickham Terrace and the Hill End Primitive Methodist Church, both in 1888.

A 'block capping' ceremony took place in September 1894, with the congregation and Ann Street band marching from the Woolloongabba Fiveways for the event. The additions cost £80 and were quickly completed. Opening services for the 'East Brisbane Tabernacle' were held on Sunday 14 October 1894, followed by a 'grand opening tea and public meeting' the following Wednesday, both presided over by Aston.

Aston's expansion program was cut short by his death in 1896. Memorial services were held in the church and a tablet in his memory was dedicated to the tabernacle by his family. The church site, which was still owned by Aston, passed to his widow Emma in 1897. She immediately transferred it to the Corporation of the Primitive Methodist Connection, who owned the site for the next sixty-seven years.

The Tabernacle became prominent within the Methodist Church as well as in East Brisbane. The church established groups to facilitate the functioning of the parish, including a Sunday School and Band of Hope, and reached out to the community with social and fundraising functions. As a community meeting place, the tabernacle hosted local political debates and meetings of improvement societies. Following the union of Methodist branches in 1898, the East Brisbane parish became head of a circuit. In 1911 it had increased to the extent that it became a stand-alone church. In the twentieth century the parish became renowned throughout Brisbane and Queensland for its choir, which won several eisteddfods in the 1910s and 1920s; and for the quality of its religious education, as the parish often topped the State in the Methodist exams. As an indication of the East

Brisbane church's value, the Corporation of the Primitive Methodist Connection mortgaged the property in 1901 for the not insignificant sum of £13,000.

With continued residential expansion in East Brisbane and the parish's ongoing popularity, the church soon outgrew its accommodation. In the 1920s the parish began to consider erecting a new church. The church choir,

Sunday School and Women's Church Help Society, set to work fundraising for the building.

In 1924, prominent architectural firm Hall and Prentice were engaged to design the new church, which was to be built in front of the old church. Hall and Prentice formed when

Thomas Ramsay Hall formed a partnership with GG Prentice in 1919. The firm designed a large number of Brisbane's significant buildings, including Brisbane City Hall [QHR 600065]. Amongst their designs were churches including Our Lady of Victories Catholic Church in Bowen Hills [QHR, 601585], the Holy Family Church in Indooroopilly and St Francis' School and Convent in West End.

Hall and Prentice's design for the East Brisbane church was Gothic, similar to other Methodist churches in Brisbane. Its interior fittings, including pulpit, communion table and rail, matched the external design. It was estimated to cost £1,800, though later records suggest it cost £2,000. The old church was re-roofed, renovated and retained for the burgeoning Sunday School, which then had over 200 students. It also continued part of the old church's function, serving as a community hall.

Hall and Prentice called for tenders for the new church in October 1924. The tender of contractor J. Hood was accepted in November. Hood, who had recently completed the construction of the nearby St Paul's Anglican Church [QHR 602826], emphasised the project in advertisements in early 1925, promoting himself as the 'Builder of New Methodist Church, East Brisbane'.² A stump capping ceremony was held in December 1924, and Hood finished work on the Primitive Methodist church the following year. On 15 March 1925, the new church was opened with a service split between the old and new buildings. The congregation marched to the new building from the old, led by the choir singing 'Onward, Christian Soldiers'.

'The scene outside the new Methodist Church (East Brisbane) on the occasion of the official opening yesterday'³

The church celebrated its golden jubilee in 1938, attended by 'old-time worshippers in the first church, some of whom well remember the vicissitudes of the cause in those days'⁴. In 1964 the Norman Street site was vested in the Methodist Church of Australasia, under new legislation. In 1977, following the amalgamation of the Australian Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches, the East Brisbane Methodist Church became part of the Uniting Church of Australia. The church was sold to the Noah's Ark Toy Library and Resource Centre in 1989, which occupied the site until 2015.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

for the evidence it provides of the development and expansion of the Primitive Methodist Church in Brisbane and the development of the East Brisbane district.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as a Methodist church complex, containing a small nineteenth century timber Carpenter Gothic style church built in the 1890s, which became the Sunday School hall when the new church was built in 1925 in a matching style and materials.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

as a site of worship and community events, for its significance to several generations of Methodists and later, members of the Uniting Church, in the East Brisbane area from 1890 to 1989.

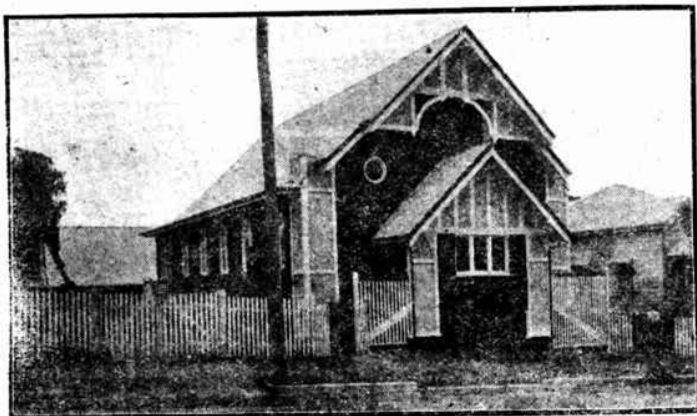
Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as two church buildings that served the spiritual needs of the Methodist community in the East Brisbane area for almost 90 years.

Supporting images



The Telegraph, 11 March 1925 p4

References

1. *The Brisbane Courier*, 25 September 1894 p4
2. *The Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland*, 7 January 1925, p. 2
3. *The Brisbane Courier*, Monday 16 March 1925 p8
4. *The Queensland Methodist Times*, 7 July 1928, p.4
5. Richard Apperly (et al), *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian architecture* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1989
6. Brisbane City Council aerial photographs, 1946, 2005, 2009
7. Brisbane City Council City Architecture and Heritage Team, citations
8. Brisbane City Council Properties on the Web
9. Brisbane City Council, Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Detail Plan No. 360
10. Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, Entries on the Queensland Heritage Register, Potters Gallery [600206], Mowbraytown Presbyterian Church Group [601219], St Paul's Anglican Church and Columbarium [602826]
11. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
12. McKellar's Official Map of Brisbane and Suburbs, 1895 and 1906
13. National Library of Australia, Trove newspapers, *The Brisbane Courier*, *The Telegraph*, *The Daily Standard*, *The Week*, *The Courier Mail*
14. *The Queensland Methodist Times*, 1938
15. Queensland Post Office Directories
16. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century: A Biographical Dictionary*. Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised June 2022)



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